
OXFAM SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY

Oxfam's Legitimacy and Role

Oxfam derives its legitimacy from its rights-based development and humanitarian work with partners and with people living in poverty. It is this direct, daily experience that gives Oxfam its deep understanding of poverty and injustice. Oxfam speaks from this experience, but does not claim to speak for or on behalf of people living in poverty. This essential distinction is one we clarify whenever we engage in advocacy and campaigning action.

Oxfam also derives legitimacy from the authoritative research it undertakes on local, national and global policies and rules which affect people living in poverty.

Lastly, Oxfam's legitimacy comes from the millions of supporters whether donors, campaigners or volunteers across the world, who express their concerns about poverty and injustice through Oxfam.

Oxfam's legitimacy also confers an obligation on Oxfam to engage in advocacy in developing countries where it can clearly increase impact. This is balanced by a principled understanding of Oxfam's role as a powerful international actor. Oxfam does not assume the role of a local organization, and recognises that it should always seek to support national civil society and not displace it.

These notes on principles, process and guidelines are written recognising that in any given situation, careful political judgements have to be made on a case-by-case basis, rather than following bureaucratic rules. However staff need to be able to demonstrate transparently across Oxfam that they have taken due account of the guidelines in the way they engage in southern advocacy and campaigning.

Key Principles

1. Oxfam will seek to support partners and allies in their advocacy and campaigns strategies because they have primary legitimacy in their own countries, and because we believe that this will have most impact in terms of promoting long-term, sustainable change. When we support, rather than lead in this way, we will subsume our own brand unless there is a justification for not doing so.
2. Oxfam can also advocate and campaign in the South in its own name where the use of the Oxfam brand significantly increases the impact on poverty, or if it is not safe for partners and allies to do so. We will always determine how and when we use our own voice in consultation with partners, allies, and Oxfam affiliate staff based in the country or region, and will be accountable for such consultation. We will assess any potential risk to the Oxfam name, and to the credibility of the work, partners and allies of other affiliates, as part of determining how and when we use our own voice. Our assessment will also take into account legal registration of Oxfam Field Offices and potential political, security or legal constraints in the country concerned.
3. In both cases, we will make the decision on how best to proceed on the basis of sound local knowledge and circumstances, including an analysis of how we think change will happen in that particular country or region. We recognise an even greater degree of care needs to be exercised when discussing national policies with national governments, rather than international issues with national governments.
4. When Oxfam enters into campaigning alliances in the south, we will do so on the basis of making a long-term commitment to achieving change, and we will not disengage from ongoing campaigns without ensuring their sustainability. This means making tough choices about the number and range of Southern campaigns that we support, and committing ourselves to making a substantial investment in capacity building for our partners and allies.
5. In its Southern campaigning and advocacy work, Oxfam will involve relevant partners, allies and staff upstream in the development of its campaign strategies and policies, and we will ensure that all of our global campaign strategies include specific objectives for Southern governments and institutions. This planning should identify points of difference and potential conflict between affiliates and with partners (where they exist,) to enable Oxfam to manage the risks involved and to enable timely decision-making

Oxfam will provide ongoing transparency with Oxfam affiliates, partners and allies regarding contacts and actions with Southern Governments and institutions.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Engagement with Embassies to multi-lateral institutions (UN, WTO, WB, IMF etc) on international issues

Current Oxfam practice is to engage with any embassy on any international issue provided we are able to speak on the basis of being informed by our partners and/or our program experience. Mostly we initiate such engagement, sometimes we are invited. This is consistent with our role as an international actor.

Such engagement does not require prior consultation but requires us to work within a framework which is consistent with agreed policies, which have been the subject of consultation with partners. (For example; our position on TRIPS, new issues and agriculture have been developed after a lot of consultation with partners and allies, if not always total agreement.) Before Oxfam or affiliate staff contact the embassies or representatives of the home countries of another affiliate, they need to get approval from the Oxfam concerned.

In the case of contacts with southern government delegations at major international conferences (WTO ministerials, WSSD, etc.) we differentiate between contacts with Ambassadors or technical level staff of ministries to exchange technical information/analysis, and high-level lobbying of Ministers.

Exchange of technical information does not require prior consultation but requires us to work within a framework, which is consistent with agreed policies, which have been the subject of consultation with partners.

However, lobbying Ministers and Ambassadors, where Oxfam is putting forward its own opinion, requires, as far as possible and given time constraints, that positions should be negotiated with partners and allies ahead of meetings with officials.

Engagement with Embassies on national issues

Oxfam or affiliates may lobby another national government on a national issue through its embassies after proper consultation and participation of partners (assuming they desire/agree to it). In a situation where there are no partners or there is significant disagreement between Oxfam and partners, a careful and conscious political judgment should be made about whether to proceed and that should be communicated clearly to interested parties before the lobbying takes place. Oxfam and affiliates will lobby the government of another affiliate home country only at the request of the concerned affiliate.

Checks should always include consultation with the Program Governance Group Chair.

Engagement with National Ministries on international issues

In line with the principles set out above, Oxfam will seek to support partners and allies in lobbying national ministries on international issues because we believe that this will have the most impact on poverty but we will also engage directly where we believe that our brand adds value. We will always make this judgment on the basis of sound local knowledge and in consultation with partners and allies.

In some cases, local organizations may want Oxfam to lead joint approaches in advocacy (especially where we have access to technical or political information which may have a greater impact.) This should be done with sensitivity and in recognition that we have been invited to do so by local actors.

In a situation where there are no partners or there is significant disagreement between us or among partners, a careful and conscious political judgment should be made about whether to proceed and that should be communicated clearly to interested parties, including the lobby targets. Oxfam should only override a majority of partners' views on an issue in exceptional circumstances.

Checks should always include consultation with the Program Governance Group Chair.

Engagement with National Ministries on national issues

Wherever possible, Oxfam should support local organizations and coalitions to lobby their own governments and institutions as this is likely to have the greatest impact. Nevertheless we will, on occasions, decide to engage directly in our own name where we believe this will add value, for example where we are invited by a credible group of independent local NGOs to participate, where there are no NGOs or where it is too dangerous for local NGOs to engage in advocacy, and in emergency situations where Oxfam needs to advocate directly to the authorities (e.g. during an emergency response.) Again this comes down to careful judgment.

If Oxfam is invited by a government for consultations on national issues, we should check with local NGOs and where there is an Oxfam Field Office from any Oxfam they should also be consulted.

Checks should always include consultation with the Program Governance Group Chair.

PROCESS AND PLANNING

Southern advocacy and campaigns should be planned and implemented with Regional Strategy Teams and appropriate Oxfam staff in country-based Field Offices, in the context of agreed Oxfam global or national campaigns. Program Governance Groups need to be engaged in the upstream planning to ensure proper sequencing of regional or country level inputs to Oxfam plans from partners, allies and staff. When a global event is held in Region, regional/national teams and local actors should

be involved. The objective is to enable quick and efficient decision-making.

The overall strategy and Oxfam's role need to be defined together with partners and allies in the national context at the very beginning of the approach. This process should identify likely impacts and risks, and thus priorities. Oxfam's regional and country teams should avoid the situation of instrumentalism of either Oxfam by Governments or of Oxfam utilizing counterparts.

This requires an analysis of the access of partners/allies and counterparts to policy makers and media (to ensure not closing space for partners/allies,) an explicit understanding of Oxfam's comparative advantage, and an analysis of both means and ends. It also requires a good communication strategy with partners, allies and governments.

An intrinsic objective of southern advocacy, wherever possible, is the capacity building of counterparts and allies. The Program Governance Group needs to ensure value added by ensuring connection between local and global, developing strong arguments backed by analysis and program experience and opening new spaces for different actors in the policy debate.

Oxfam's media strategy should include creating opportunities for counterparts to build a media profile (while not excluding possibilities that media may only want to talk to Oxfam.)

Southern advocacy and campaigns require explicit exit/maintenance strategies to manage the expectations of partners and allies beyond the life of the campaign. The Program Governance Groups and Country Managing Affiliate need to ensure follow-up both in-country and internationally.

Program Governance Groups will be asked to report annually to the Global Campaign Team and EDs on Oxfam International and affiliate Southern Campaigns and Advocacy in their region. The OI Advocacy Director will report annually to the GCT on actions under engagement with Embassies. After three years, the GCT Learning Group will review our collective experience in this area and recommend any changes required to policy or practice.